



# U.S. COAST GUARD



## Homeland Security

## Flag Voice 244

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### OFFICER COMMAND OPPORTUNITIES

With the transition to Sectors and Deepwater assets just over the horizon, there has been lots of discussion and conjecture about what impact these two major organizational initiatives will have on command opportunities for the officer corps. Change always brings a certain level of anxiety and uncertainty. This is normal. At the same time, there is always opportunity. Those who see the opportunity and seize it will be successful. Two of the most enduring characteristics of the Coast Guard are that we have been adaptable and flexible in meeting the maritime safety and security needs of the nation throughout our distinguished 215 year history. That's why we bring so much value to the American taxpayer and that's why we've been around for so long. We have the same core purposes, but are remarkably different than the Revenue Cutter Service, the Life Saving Service, the Lighthouse Service, and the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation.

I want to clear up some rather widely held misunderstandings with the facts as we know them today. We've done some projections out to 15 years to provide the best insight we can about command opportunities for officers. These projections are based on the best information we have. They are, of course, subject to some margin of error. However, I think the projections are reasonable, and I'm confident enough about the margin of error to share the data with you. First of all, command opportunities for officers are alive and well. The nature of those command opportunities has and will continue to change, but so has the nature of our work. Moreover, the opportunity to do complex, critical and rewarding work in highly responsible positions other than command will flourish. From attached chart one, you can see that for the period from 9/11 to post-Sector implementation the total number of commands for officers (O-6 to O-2) will only fall by 11 (347 to 336), just 3%. Chart two provides a slightly more detailed look at expected command opportunities and projects out to 2020. From 2010 to 2020, total command opportunities are expected to remain unchanged (at 336), but the nature and level of those command opportunities will change. This is graphically depicted in chart three.

Along with the charts, I've attached some frequently asked questions and answers. Please use them as you see fit to place what's happening in our dynamic and robust Service into proper perspective. I also hope you find them useful in providing career guidance. We are in the process of standing up about 40 Sectors, most of which will be operational by the end of this fiscal year. Sectors better align our field command structure, creating more effective unity of effort and a single Coast Guard voice within each respective OPAREA. Some ashore command opportunities are lost because of the consolidation of Groups, Marine Safety Offices, Vessel Traffic Services, and some Air Stations. However, critically important and highly responsible Prevention, Response and Logistics Department Head positions are created to meet our ever complex, multi-mission requirements. Command opportunities elsewhere have increased with the creation of 13 MSSTs, the Special Mission Training Center, the Maritime Law Enforcement Academy, and 4 PC 170s with 5 crews. Fielding Deepwater is just

over the horizon. If we adopt multiple crews for our major cutters to deploy them at least 230 days and still deploy our sailors no more than 185 days a year, there will be even more afloat command opportunities in 2010 and 2020 than depicted on charts two and three. O-6 and O-5 command afloat opportunities could increase by about 3 and 7, respectively.

I'll keep you informed as we proceed to best position the Coast Guard for continued successful for today and tomorrow. Our future is bright. Seize the opportunities it offers.

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Regards,

*RADM Kenneth T. Venuto*  
Ken Venuto

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